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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, July 5, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "How the Drought Affects the National Food Supply." Approved by Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Today I want to give you a few of the facts I've gathered lately about the nation's food supply for the next twelve months.

Experts say that the great drought of 1934 is the worst that has ever happened at this time of year. It has blighted a great territory. Government relief agencies are already at work, in the drought-stricken areas, helping the hundreds of thousands of farm families whose crops have failed, and whose livestock is threatened. Livestock is being forced out of the drought sections, because of the acute shortage of feed.

Well, it is serious enough, when there's not sufficient feed for livestock, but we would be in a much worse condition, if there weren't enough food for all the families in the United States.

You may have heard rumors of a national food shortage. There has been talk that we won't raise enough food in this country to supply the whole nation. But the fact is that we are not facing a national food shortage. The drought has affected our food supply, but prospects are far from hopeless. We'll have enough bread and meat, vegetables and fruit, and dairy products and eggs, for the next twelve months. We can all rest assured that the nation is not going to be hungry for lack of food supply. There will be food enough for all.

Now, the question that comes to mind is this: Won't prices go up?

Yes, during the next twelve months prices naturally will be higher, as supplies of some foods are reduced. On the other hand, we have big surpluses of some food products.

According to the agricultural economists, who keep a close check on everything grown and produced for food, the most striking changes in the food situation for the next year will be an unusually big supply of low-grade beef, and a decrease in the production of dairy products and eggs.

The farm production of eggs per hen, as reported on June first, was the smallest in ten years. Grain has been so scarce, and so high-priced, that farmers couldn't afford to feed chickens heavily.

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Now, about milk production. For the next twelve months we can expect a decrease in dairy products. Pastures are exceedingly poor, supplies of grain and hay are short, and prices of feed are increasing. There may be a somewhat smaller supply of milk in some sections. This may result in higher prices.

No one can tell exactly what effect the drought is likely to have on prices of all foods. It's too early to predict, except in a very general way. But here are some of the facts:

Because of the large stocks of old wheat on hand, our supply will be ample for domestic needs, and we will carry a fairly large stock of wheat over into the next crop year. We'll have wheat for bread, and wheat for cereal. And by the way, the rice crop is grown outside the drought areas, and there will be plenty of rice for our needs.

The number of animals on farms is more than sufficient to produce the meat and milk that the nation needs. With emergency forage plantings, and with close use of the stocks of forage now on hand, farmers should have enough feed to turn out enough animal products for the use of our people. There will be plenty of meat -- a normal supply of high-grade meat, and a very large supply of low-grade meat.

Drought-stricken farmers must sell their livestock, because of the scarcity and high price of feed. Naturally, this stock will not make meat of high quality. High feed costs are sending large supplies of hogs to market. For the next month or two, the market supply of pork will be increased, and for the next five or six months, we'll probably have increased supplies of beef, veal, and lamb. After the period of forced selling, we can expect some decrease in meat supplies. However, this does not mean a national meat shortage.

As to the vegetable situation. We Americans eat more potatoes than any other vegetable. Will we have plenty of potatoes for the next year? The crop experts say yes. We don't need to worry about the potato crop. Even if the 1934 crop should fail completely, in the drought States, we still have a somewhat greater supply than last year. The production of other vegetables for commercial shipping is still uncertain, but seems likely to be greater than last year. The same is true of dry beans, and peanuts.

It's too early to forecast the fruit crop accurately, but the experts say it probably won't be more than ten per cent below average -- that means it will probably be about as big as last year's crop.

Now, to summarize the food situation again -- we are not facing a national food shortage, and the most noticeable changes during the next year are likely to be reduced supplies of dairy products and eggs, and increased supplies of low-grade beef.

